

Not a Spectator Sport

A Community Development Framework

Governance
& Community Services
2013



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Introduction

‘Not a Spectator Sport’ aims to clarify Meander Valley Council’s commitment to community development and to map the work of its Governance and Community Services Department.

It is a corporate document that sits alongside Council’s Strategic Plan and Annual Plan. The Five Core Needs it identifies provide a valuable framework to support community development across wide service areas. Examples of how this is done can be seen in section 13.

I recommend this document to you.



Craig Perkins
Mayor



1

Overview

Rural and regional Australia face ongoing challenges through social, economic, environmental and technological change. Globalisation, the decline of traditional industries, shifting demographics and societal norms and population migration are eroding the social cohesion of rural communities. This is leading to a general decline in health and wellbeing of communities.

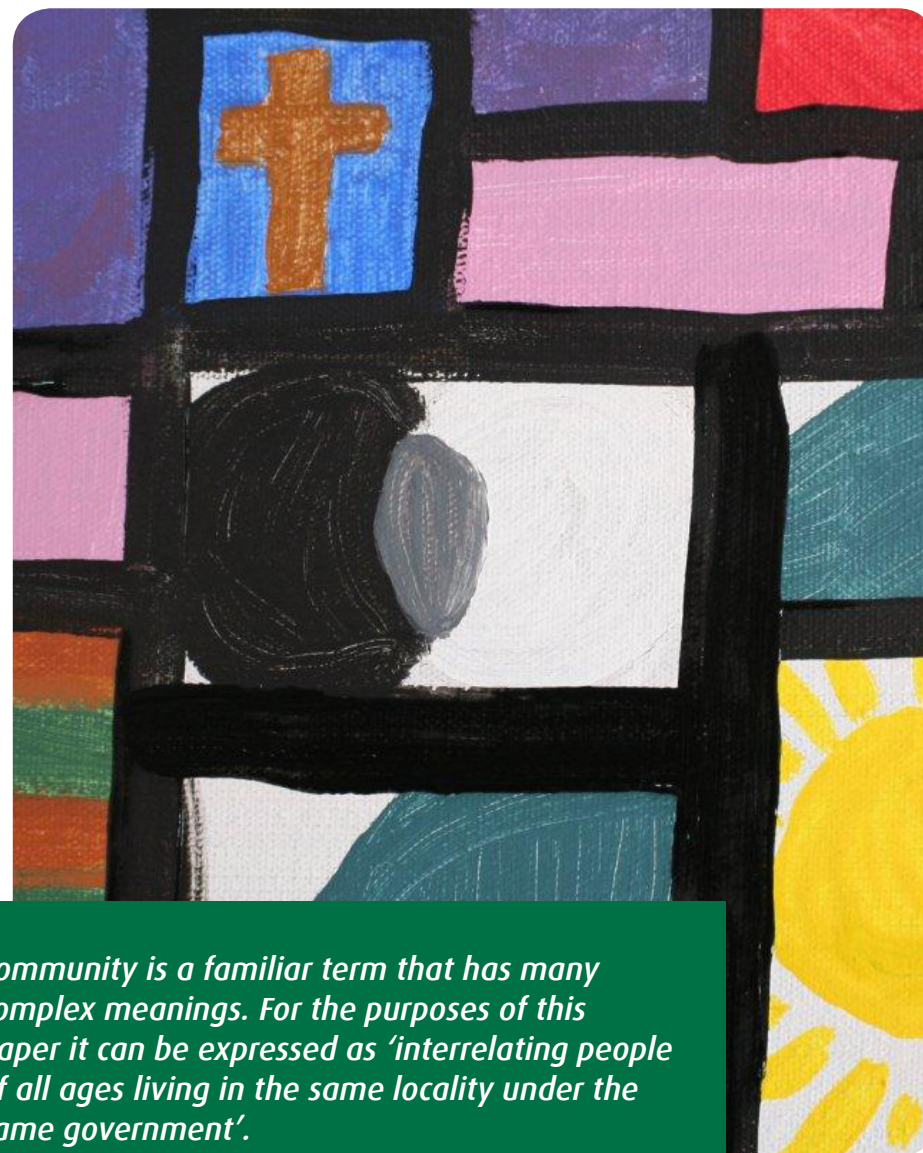
Evidence shows that self-reliant communities are more resilient in a changing environment and achieve better outcomes for all (www.bankofideas.com.au).

Resilient communities can be characterised by their ability to bounce back from adversity, largely through self-help. Other features include: participation by residents in community life, economic vitality, pride of place, ease of access to services, community harmony, commitment

to recreation, lifelong learning and cultural experiences (*Why Some Towns Thrive Whilst Others Languish - Plowman, Ashkanasy, Gardner, Letts, 2003*).

Local Government in Tasmania has a responsibility to provide for the health, safety and welfare of its communities as identified in the Local Government Act 1993 (section 20:1a). It is ideally placed to support community resilience through its knowledge of local issues and networks, its expertise in working with public and private sectors and its direct demographic accountability.

Meander Valley Council's Governance and Community Services Department encourages community resilience through a community development approach, building capacity by encouraging local leadership, participation and collaboration.



Community is a familiar term that has many complex meanings. For the purposes of this paper it can be expressed as 'interrelating people of all ages living in the same locality under the same government'.

(Patrick Gambles, 2012)

Small Town Australia is certainly at a crossroads. The majority of small inland towns continue to haemorrhage in terms of population and business life. This decline is not new, but has intensified over the last two decades.

(Peter Kenyon, 2009)



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Community Development is ...



In a nutshell, Community Development is about helping people to help themselves.

(David Pyke, 2012)

Community development is a universally acknowledged approach to working with communities based on principles of equality, empowerment and collective action. It is based on the belief that communities can positively shape their futures through connected efforts and the sharing of responsibility between individuals, organisations, businesses and all levels of government.

Community development recognises that meaningful (and sustainable) growth cannot be imposed from outside, but must emerge from within a community. Community development, therefore, helps individuals and groups to further their potential and organise themselves to respond to problems and needs which they share. It also enables community and public agencies to work together to improve the quality of government.

Community development is a learning process where new attitudes, skills and networks

develop from action and reflection. It starts from a community's own concerns and travels at the residents' pace. It brings people together to explore their lives and issues and to identify changes that they want to achieve. It provides user-friendly frameworks to help community planning and identifies appropriate learning opportunities and resources along the way. It is values-based with a purpose to address disadvantage and seek positive social change.

Some of its key concepts include:

- Collaboration
- Community action
- Connectedness
- Equity
- Empowerment
- Leadership and skill development

These concepts build resilience.

Within a local government context, community development blends 'bottom up' community-driven change, with 'top down' Council resourcing and facilitation.

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Complementary Concepts

In recent years, concepts have emerged in support of self-determination that sit ideologically within a framework of community development. These are all inter-related and difficult to separate. The following are some simple definitions:

- **Social capital** refers to the networks and shared values and norms that exist between people that enable them to coordinate action to achieve desired goals.
- **Community engagement** refers to the active participation and collaboration of people in community affairs.
- **Asset-based community development (ABCD)** is a methodology that focuses on the strengths within communities as a means for sustainable development.
- **Social planning** is a public planning approach that investigates and responds to the needs and aspirations of people and communities.
- **Community capacity-building** refers to the strengthening of skills, commitment and resources of individuals and groups so that they may better meet their own needs and participate more fully in society.
- **Sustainable communities** are economically, environmentally, and socially healthy and resilient. They meet challenges through integrated solutions and take a long-term perspective - one that is focused on both the present and future.



All the historic evidence indicates that significant community development only takes place when local community people are committed to investing themselves and their resources in the effort. That is why you cannot develop communities from the top down, or from the outside in.

(McKnight & Kretzmann, 1990)

4

Clarifying Common Misconceptions

Community development is not ...

- **about 'service delivery'**

Community development involves residents exploring their own needs and actively participating in achieving goals. Service delivery can be disempowering, however, it can be useful within a community development context as a stimulant to engagement.

- **a 'numbers game'**

If only five people turn up to a public meeting, the work begins with these five and grows from there.

- **a 'feel good' exercise**

Community development produces real 'bricks and mortar' and 'dollars and cents' outcomes through innovative actions and skill development.

- **a 'cure-all'**

Community development will not provide the answer to all problems, such as a cheap way of providing services or demonstrating management efficiency, but it will build meaningful and sustainable people-power.

- **a 'quick fix'**

Community development is a long-term process, focusing on people, their needs and aims. Its long-term nature is essential to ensure changes are sustainable and long-lasting.

- **another way of saying 'working in partnership'**

Community development is the activity that enables many people to get to the partnership table in the first place.

- **just for community development workers**

Anyone can adopt a community development approach within their working and everyday lives by being consultative, considerate and involved.



5

The Nature of Community Development Work

Community development work is a bit like jump-starting a car. You get behind it, give it a shove, run alongside and then get out of the way!

(Ian Howard, MVC Councillor 2012)



The role of the community development worker is often one of restraint rather than action. Key watchwords are facilitating, enabling, encouraging, supporting, informing, listening and responding. If a project is dependent upon the leadership of the community development worker (beyond its early stages) then the chances are that the community 'ownership' and long-term benefits will be limited.

Being community-led and people-centred requires a flexible and responsive approach. Projects are wide-ranging and frequently materialise without notice and often change. Timelines can be pressured or sometimes unknown and circumstances unpredictable.

The learning process within a project is often more important than its product outcome although both elements are essential for a fully rewarding experience.

Exit strategies for community development workers can be difficult as the work often continues to grow beyond each experience and there is a need for ongoing assistance or support to a similar group.

Accepting the above, the end game should always be about self-determination and the worker's role should be a transient, reducing one.

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Benefits

Although labour-intensive, evidence suggests that a community development approach is a good use of limited resources as time invested often pays off exponentially in the longer term.

For example, the Governance and Community Services Department's commitment to 'training' over the last 3 years has stimulated a growing base of over 50 volunteer leaders who are now actively engaged in

their communities, supporting Council programs and developing their own projects. This has had an important impact on the wellbeing of the municipality.



Other benefits include:

- More people taking part in community affairs
- Expanded leadership base
- Positive health and wellbeing outcomes
- Strengthened individual skills
- A strategic agenda for change
- More widely shared vision for the future
- More effective community organisations and services
- Better use of resources.

7

Economic Development and Community Development

Economic development is an integral part of community development. A community cannot function effectively without adequate employment, business activity and infrastructure.

Community development improves the ability of communities to collectively make better decisions about resources. It mobilises attitudes, skills and networks to address problems more creatively and use community assets in new ways. Some community development practitioners describe their work as community economic development.

Meander Valley Council has an Economic Development and Sustainability Department that nurtures tourism and business enterprise within a context of environmental sustainability. Its commercial outlook drives creative change that is reliant on flexible, cohesive communities.

Community health and community wealth are interdependent.

(Vicki Jordan, MVC Youth Development Officer, 2012)



The outcome of successful community development is communities that are more able to generate wealth, maintain or improve their competitive position, preserve and use community resources and adapt to change.

(Shaffer, 1989)



8

Assessing Community Development Outcomes



The more people know each other's first name, the lower the crime rate in the neighbourhood.

(Robert Putnam)

Community development strategies are difficult to evaluate as person-centred processes are so diverse and outcomes reveal themselves in subtle ways over indefinite timeframes. There are, however, some social determinants against which community resilience can be considered that provide a useful focus for community development work.

A community's resilience to change and challenge can be estimated by its perceived commitment to:

- Volunteerism
- Celebrations
- Events
- Partnerships
- Lifelong learning
- Self-determination (local leadership)

- Cultural experiences
- Young people
- Vibrant business
- Local achievers

The value of a community development project or experience can be gauged according to how well it impacts on these determinants.

Caveat

'Relationships' are the essential glue that holds communities together. They flow from shared values, activities and goals and build networks through which communities thrive. They are difficult to measure yet their impact on health and wellbeing, perceptions of safety, inclusion and personal support is immense. Relationships are supported by community development work.

9

The Challenges of Technology

We are in an information age and the Internet, for all its omnipresence, is still in its infancy. Technology is advancing at speed reshaping political, economic and social norms. Society has embraced its potential and already enjoys innumerable efficiencies. Whilst the journey is exciting, there are costs to consider.

Virtual relationships are spawning across our Global Village propelled by social media and mobile devices. Worldwide interest groups form and fold at the drop of a hat and virtual 'friendships' are courted and prized with little thought to personal privacy. These multi-media, arms length exchanges are often less demanding than real interaction. For Generation Z (at least) they are becoming a worrying obsession that could lead to a serious loss of social skills and physical wellbeing. Conversely, older people who are less inclined to embrace new technologies are also at risk of alienation.



The World Health Organisation identifies ten determinants of health, of which two are social inclusion and social support.

(DHHS 2009-2012)

The challenge for communities (and community development workers) is to balance the benefits of technology with the richness of real relationships. For all that technology may provide it is the

expression of physical nearness that is the truest building block of Humanity.

10

Common Pitfalls

Community development requires qualities that can be contradictory - passion and patience, vision and focus, commitment and control. Being a people-centred process there is an innate human element which brings unpredictability and a tendency for over-ambition. Some common pitfalls include:

- **Focusing on symptoms**
Look to address the real causes.
- **Starting too big**
Focus on 'quick wins' and gradual improvement.
- **Being representative**
Do not assume you have a community mandate. The most resistance to community efforts comes from community members themselves.
- **Planning without action**
Over-planning and under-acting breeds frustration.
- **Burnout**
The bulk of community work falls to a willing few - these community 'champions' are precious and fragile. Share the load; strive for a broad base, make things fun and set time limits on commitment.

Strong relationships and understanding the needs of the community takes time. Once established, they provide you with the ability to bring about positive change.

(Ted Ross, 2012)



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Community Development in Action



*Community building is not
a spectator sport!*

(Bruce Adams)

Meander Valley Council's engagement with community takes many forms. Its strategic commitment to 'working together' articulates a philosophy that underpins a vast range of relationships, goals and settings.

The Governance and Community Services Department works with individuals, groups and agencies through spheres as diverse as youth work, positive ageing, the arts, sport and recreation and community safety. Across this landscape of infinite scenarios the stepping stone principles of community development provide a consistent pathway:

- Valuing people first
- Starting from where people are
- Acknowledging existing skills
- Nurturing potential

- Learning through doing
- Stimulating self-confidence and responsibility
- Promoting community involvement
- Encouraging collective effort.

Linkages

The successful implementation of a community development approach relies heavily on collaboration and active partnership. Meander Valley Council fosters strong relationships with individuals, community organisations, schools, information services, government agencies, business and industry.

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A Community Development Framework

Experience gleaned from years of program delivery, research, training and consultation has led Council's Governance and Community Services Department to identify Five Core Needs around which to structure its community development work. These needs are interrelated and fundamental to individuals, families, organisations and communities alike. They echo Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs' of 1954.

Put simply, all people (regardless of their capability, ethnicity, age and gender) are sustained by being:

Creative

Creativity fosters innovation and expression. It has a spiritual and emotional dimension that can raise awareness and connect people in new ways. The creative process is often exposing and participants need to feel secure.

Healthy

Good health relates to one's physical, mental and social wellbeing. It is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

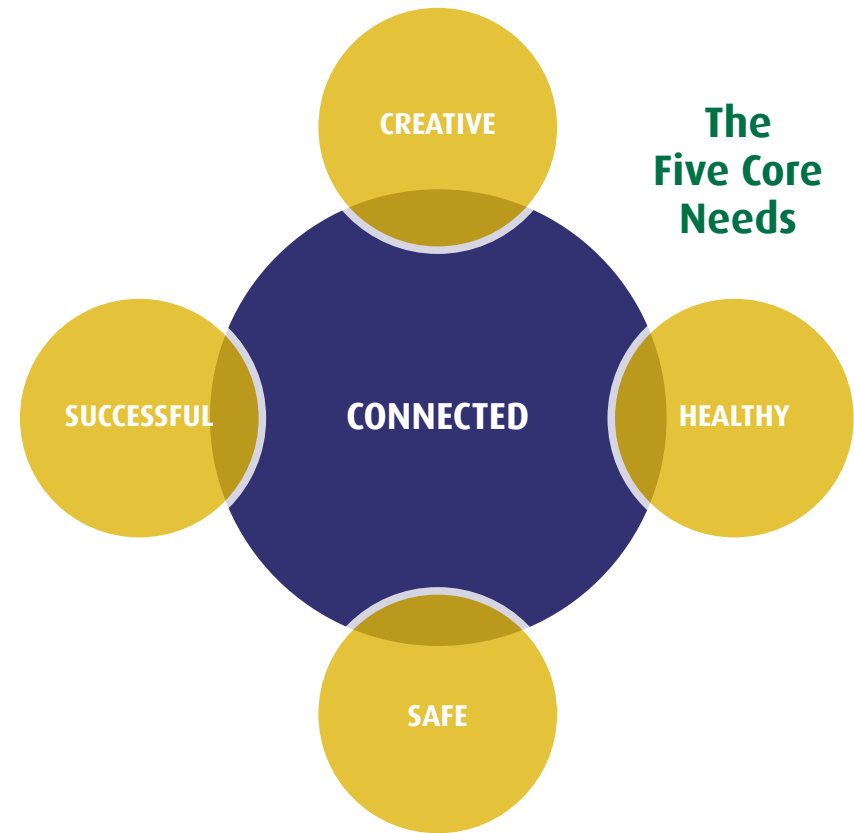
Safe

Feeling safe is the absence of fear and risk of harm. It is a prerequisite for a happy life and a right and a

responsibility that we all share. Community safety relates to many things such as: crime prevention, the built and natural environment, personal health, perceptions and relationships. A safe community is caring, connected, respectful and progressive.

Successful

Success is personal satisfaction through achievement. It involves the development of skills and awareness that enables a person to become a valued and productive member of society. This increases one's sense of self-worth.



Connected

Connectedness is a having positive relationship with yourself, your environment, your heritage and culture and the people that make up your community. It is an all-embracing Need that gives deeper meaning to the other four Core Needs.

The Five Core Needs provide a common framework to direct the way the Department works with

different population groups (e.g. children, young people, parents, seniors, people with disabilities, migrants, unemployed etc). It gives consistency and shape to the more specific strategies that respond to each particular group. The framework also acts as a firm foundation for building community resilience and sustainability.

People want to live in safe, healthy communities. They want to feel able to be who they are, have positive prospects for their future and experience respect and fair treatment.

(Annette Barrett, 2012)

Summary Statement

The Five Core Needs provide a valuable framework to support community development.

The diverse work of Council's Governance and Community Services Department is organised in response to this framework. Examples of how this is done can be seen in Section 13.



13

Governance & Community Service Programs

If community development is how the Governance and Community Services Department works with its communities, then this section outlines what the Department actually delivers.

The Five Core Needs are intrinsically linked and Council programs address many of them simultaneously. For example, 'Supporting the establishment of

a Meander Valley University of the Third Age' impacts on being creative, healthy, safe, successful and connected.

For clarity, Section 13 lists Council programs only once under their main Core Need. One can only imagine the vast tapestry of support these programs weave across all five 'Needs' categories.



Creativity fosters innovation and expression and connects people in new ways.

Being Creative

Creativity fosters innovation and expression. It has a spiritual and emotional dimension that can raise awareness and connect people in new ways. The creative process is often exposing and participants need to feel secure.

Council will:

- promote and support creative programs
- develop infrastructure, policies and resources to support arts and enterprise
- Assist the celebration of cultural heritage.
- establishing a Public Arts Policy
- supporting public art initiatives such as the Westbury Silhouette Trail
- supporting community cultural events (Agfest, Tasmanian Craft Fair, Westbury Saint Patricks Festival, Jackey's Marsh Forest Festival, Tasmanian Mountain Cattlemen Association's Annual Get Together, Agricultural Shows, ANZAC Day ceremonies, etc.)
- facilitating research around identified needs e.g. arts/health initiatives
- promotion of opportunities and achievements through the Meander Valley News and other media outlets.

This will be achieved through:

- Council community grants
- applications to other funding bodies
- subsidised training e.g. Media Arts Studio programs (Studio Be)
- Meandering - annual art exhibition
- further development of the Meander Valley Performing Arts Centre

Governance & Community Service Programs (continued)

Being Healthy

Good health relates to one's physical, mental and social wellbeing. It is not merely the absence of disease or infirmity.

Council will:

- continue to improve recreational facilities across the municipality
- train volunteer recreation leaders
- facilitate active recreation programs
- help young people and their families to manage personal crises
- develop strong interagency links
- further address the recommendations of the Meander Valley Health & Wellbeing Map 2007
- support social initiatives
- help to make health information more available.

This will be achieved through:

- facility development plans (e.g. Tredwell Report, Prospect Vale Park)
- community hall and recreation ground reviews
- the coordination of recreation facility hire
- subsidised training: Community Recreation Leaders' Award Program
- sponsorship support to individuals engaged in representative sport
- partnership programs with State Government agencies such as the Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) and Sport & Recreation Tasmania
- Outdoor recreation programs in partnership with DHHS
- primary and high school holiday programs



Good health relates to one's physical, mental and social wellbeing.

- supporting the establishment of a Meander Valley University of the Third Age
- contributing to new recreation facilities e.g. Hadspen Skate Run, Deloraine Kids Zone playground
- reviewing the Meander Valley Sport and Recreation Action Plan 2008 - 2011
- access to counselling via DHHS
- support of Sustainable House Day and other environmental and sustainability initiatives
- participating in the Meander Valley Early Years Network
- coordination of Council's Recreation Coordination Committee
- staff modeling of healthy behaviours supported by Council's Health & Wellbeing Program
- facilitating research around identified needs e.g. obesity and isolation
- awareness raising and the promotion of opportunities and achievements through the Meander Valley News and other media outlets.

Governance & Community Service Programs (continued)

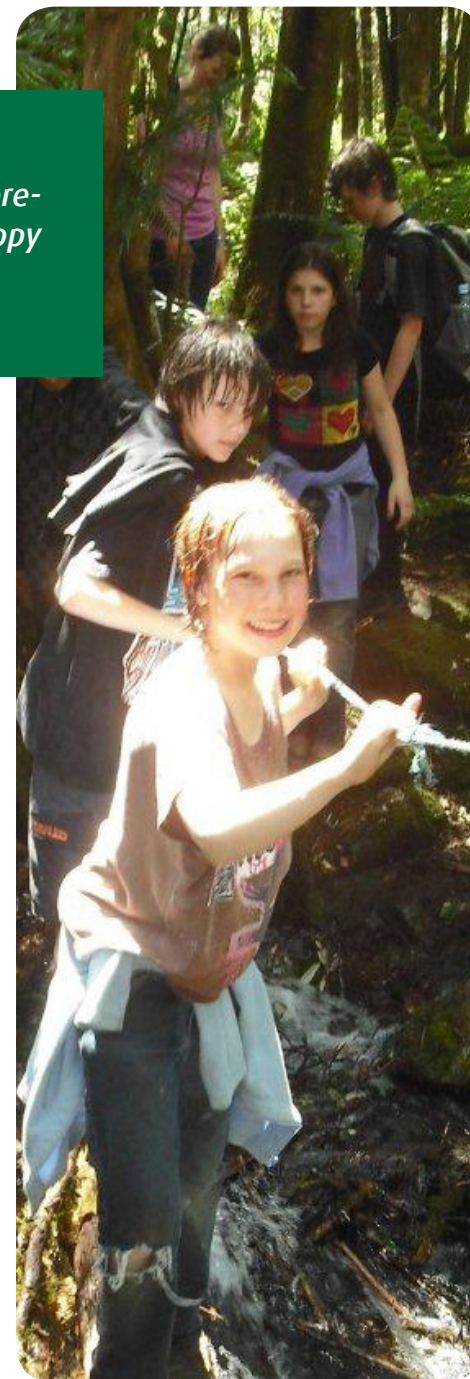
Being Safe

Feeling safe is the absence of fear and risk of harm. It is a prerequisite for a happy life and a right and a responsibility that we all share. Community safety relates to many things such as: crime prevention, the built and natural environment, personal health, perceptions and relationships. A safe community is caring, connected, respectful and progressive.

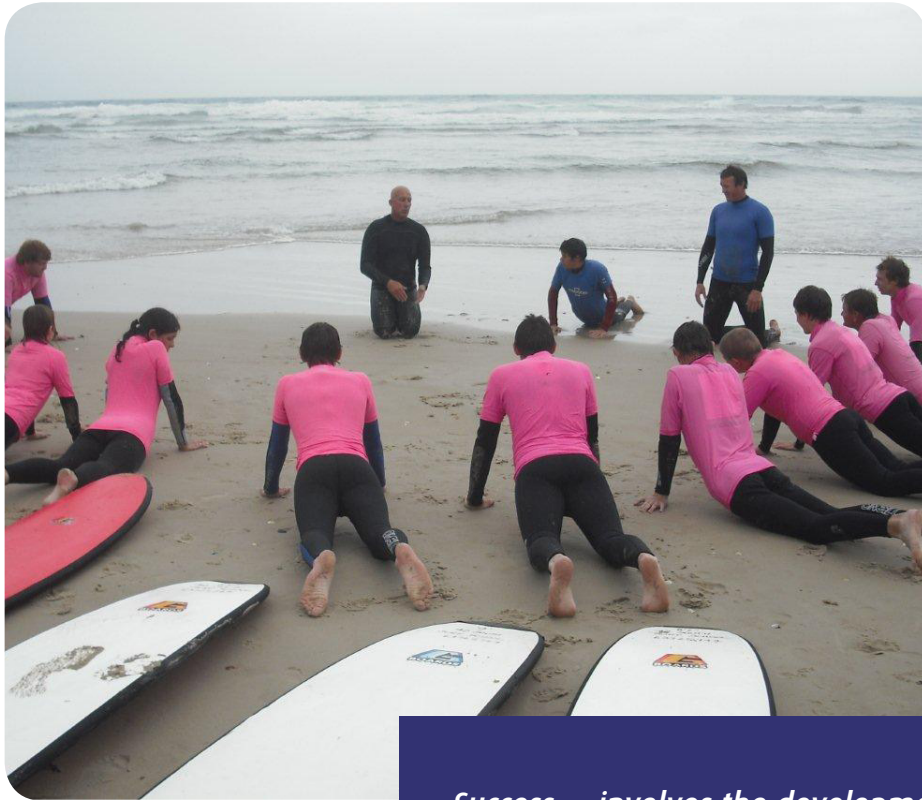
Council will:

- promote safe behaviours
 - work to reduce accidents on the road
 - raise public awareness of general hazards and dangers
 - encourage intergenerational programs
 - improve access and safety in Council facilities, playgrounds and open spaces.
- This will be achieved through:
- the Meander Valley Emergency Management and Community Recovery Committee
 - good practice in governance (risk management, OH&S, codes of conduct, policies, etc)
 - free youth work training - Working Well with Young People program
 - the Community Road Safety Partnership with the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources (DIER)
 - youth programs such as 'Rock and Water', 'Party Safe', 'Drumbeat' and learner driver support (in partnership with DHHS and schools)
 - the Meander Valley Community Safety Group participation in community conferencing of young offenders
 - awareness raising the promotion of opportunities and achievements through the Meander Valley News and other media outlets.
 - assisting infrastructure management and maintenance programs
 - supporting community celebrations such as Westbury Week
 - emergency preparedness training in partnership with Red Cross and others
 - emergency management and community recovery plans
 - community mentoring programs such as 'Co-Pilots'
 - facilitating research around identified needs e.g. perceptions of risk

Feeling safe is a prerequisite for a happy life.



Governance & Community Service Programs (continued)



Success ... involves the development of skills and awareness that enables one to become a valued and productive member of society.

Being Successful

Success is personal satisfaction through achievement. It involves the development of skills and awareness that enables a person to become a valued and productive member of society. This increases one's sense of self-worth.

Council will:

- create entry points for leadership and personal development
- encourage work skills training
- work in partnership with schools and other agencies to support community learning
- support the expansion of leisure activities.

This will be achieved through:

- Stepping Stones Leadership Camps
- National Youth Week events
- the Community Recreation Leaders' Award Program
- the Working Well with Young People program
- school holiday program leadership experience
- Australia Day and Volunteer Recognition Awards

- the Artists in Schools Program
- meeting regularly with local school representatives
- supporting community literacy programs through LINC
- traineeship and work experience placements at Council
- MyFile - Passport to Success initiative
- nomination of community projects for public awards e.g. Studio Be - arts winner of National Local Government Awards 2012
- facilitating research around identified needs e.g. barriers to learning
- awareness raising and the promotion of opportunities and achievements through the Meander Valley News and other media outlets.

Governance & Community Service Programs (continued)

Being Connected

Connectedness is having a positive relationship with yourself, your environment, heritage and culture and the people that make up your community. It is an all-embracing need that gives deeper meaning to the other four Core Needs.

Council will:

- promote and celebrate achievements
- increase opportunities for community participation
- encourage community collaboration and partnership
- maintain a directory of community services and organisations
- provide support to isolated individuals and families (with DHHS support)
- work with communities to address transport limitations
- provide information on the benefits of community development practice.

This will be achieved through:

- the Meander Valley Community Directory
- responding promptly and positively to community initiatives
- community collaboration in the formation of Council plans and strategies e.g. Public Art Policy and Sport and Recreation planning
- participation in the Meander Valley Interagency Support Team
- partnership with DHHS on community services and programs

- completion of the 'Sofa So Good' community consultation project
- supporting community progress initiatives such as Westbury Working Together
- awareness raising and the promotion of opportunities and achievements through the Meander Valley News and other media outlets
- supporting the work of local online access centres
- supporting the development of Meander Valley FM Community Radio station
- encouraging events and activities to be located in smaller communities e.g. school holiday programs in Bracknell
- providing a communication portal and up to date information on Council's website
- participation in the Meander Valley Volunteer Coordinators' Network
- facilitating research around identified needs e.g. Men's Shed movement.



Connectedness is having a positive relationship with yourself, your environment, heritage and culture and the people that make up your community.

14

How Community Development Work is Reported

As stated previously, community development is not a numbers game. Its richness comes from personal growth achieved through relationships. This is difficult to gauge as people respond to stimulus in so many different ways.

The impact of community development intervention on an individual could be immediate or take years to unfurl, perhaps revealing itself in seemingly disconnected forms. For example, a marginalised and disengaged young person could, through one supportive arts experience, discover the beginnings of a self-belief that can grow to redefine their pathway in the world.

Naturally, this will take time – empowerment is not instantaneous – the vital thing is that the journey begins.

A legitimate form of reporting of community development that is often overlooked is the ‘story’. An honest account by a participant or observer can provide a qualitative insight into the value of an experience that goes way beyond ‘how many turned up?’ and ‘how much did it cost?’ A mix of qualitative and quantitative measures offers the most comprehensive feedback and this is reflected in the Department of Governance and Community Services’ reporting schedule table.

Medium	Audience	Rate
Meander Valley News/Examiner	Community	Monthly
Correspondence from service partners and community members	Councillors and staff	Occasional
School newsletters and community noticeboards	Community	Regular
Council website	Community	Continuous
Community events	Community	Regular
Community radio	Community	Weekly
Photographs	Community	Regular
Anecdotal feedback (stories)	All	Continuous
Briefing Reports	Councillors and staff	Monthly
Annual Report	Community	Annual
Surveys	Community	Occasional
Surveys	Service Providers	Occasional
Presentations	Community	Twice-yearly
Funding reports and award nominations	Service providers	Twice-yearly

15

Why Community Development Matters

Community development promotes social participation which stimulates relationships and a sense of connectedness and belonging. This impacts significantly on personal health and wellbeing.

By harnessing community resources, skills are developed, awareness is raised and amazing things are achieved through collective effort.

Community development is a foundation for active and empathic citizenship, sound governance and sustainable communities. Its principles will drive the work of Meander Valley Council's Department of Governance and Community Services into the future.

Nothing more surely builds community than engagement in shared tasks.

(John W Gardner)



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Complementary Guidelines

The Governance and Community Services Department has a number of plans that support its community development approach:

- Council Community Grants Program Guidelines
- Meander Valley Council Annual Plan
- Meander Valley Council Strategic Plan 2004-2014
- Meander Valley Emergency Management and Community Recovery Plans
- Meander Valley Health & Wellbeing Map 2007
- Meander Valley Sport and Recreation Action Plan 2008-2011
- VALLEY SAFE Meander Valley Community Safety Plan 2012-2015
- Young Persons' Strategy Statement 2008-2011



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Meander Valley Council
WORKING TOGETHER

*If you want a year of prosperity, grow grass
If you want 10 years of prosperity, grow trees
If you want 100 years of prosperity, grow people.*

(Scott's Bluff Leadership)

